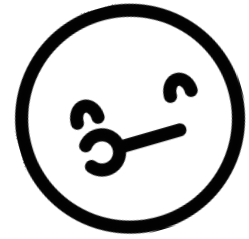




PODCAST FREEBIE

Oral Seeking

As talked about on the All Things Sensory podcast, Episode #159 -
Tips for Oral Seekers



Examples of Oral Seeking Behavior

1 CHEWING / SUCKING ON NON FOOD ITEMS

- Mouthing writing utensils, shirt collar or sleeves, fingers, etc.
- Chewing on hair, on fingers, etc.

2 GRINDING TEETH - WHILE AWAKE AND/OR DURING SLEEP

3 TOO MUCH FOOD IN MOUTH WHILE EATING (OVER-STUFFING) AND/OR POOR ORAL MOTOR CONTROL

- Over-stuffing can also be a safety concern.
- Poor oral motor control while eating can look like food falling out of mouth, drooling, not chewing properly, open mouth chewing, etc.

4 BITING OTHERS, BITING SELF

While biting others can be a common occurrence in young children, especially as they begin learning to socialize, it is not common after expectations are taught.

5 MAKING EXCESSIVE NOISES WITH MOUTH

Such as humming, buzzing, clicking, etc. to the point of disturbing others.

Why Does My Child Seek Oral Input?

- Children will seek out oral motor input because their body feels like it's not getting enough - they are under-responsive (also known as hyposensitive).
- Oral motor input is calming and grounding, so seeking oral input can be a sign that the child is looking for a way to feel calm.

Strategies For Infants / Toddlers:

1 START YOUNG WITH ORAL MOTOR INPUT

- Keep it simple - use your finger or a lightly vibrating mouth tool (check out [ARK Therapeutic](#)). A little goes a long way, so make it short and sweet.

2 IMITATION GAMES & MIRROR PLAY

- Stick out your tongue, puff up your cheeks - and encourage your toddler to imitate you!
- Use a mirror so they can see what their mouth is doing.

3 NAME ALL MOUTH PIECES

- Before your child can talk, you can begin naming the parts of the mouth while pointing and touching them on yourself and your child.

4 BLOW BUBBLES

- Let your child watch your mouth while you blow bubbles.
- Then, start teaching them to blow bubbles! They will imitate you!

5 VIBRATION

- Vibrating mouth tools from ARK, vibrating toothbrush, vibrating teethers ... all things vibration to provide proprioceptive input which increases awareness and muscle development!

Strategies For School Age Children:

1 VISUAL FEEDBACK DURING MEALTIME

- Use a small stand-up mirror during mealtime to improve awareness of food and oral structures.

2 CHEW ITEMS

- Chewable bracelets, necklaces, pencil toppers, etc.

3 ORAL MOTOR GAMES

- Using various size straws - or without straws - play blowing and sucking games using pom poms, small pieces of cereal, etc. Bubble mountain is a favorite!

4 USE STRAWS

- Use fun straws to drink liquids. Try using straws with puree foods such as thick smoothies, applesauce, etc.
- Use a water bottle with a bite-suck straw.

5 MORE INPUT DURING MEALTIMES

- Try more foods that are crunchy, chewy, have more intense flavors, different temperatures, etc.
- Also try sour spray.
- Chewing gum is also a great option in between meals.

6 RULE OUT A TONGUE TIE

- A tongue tie is a potential factor in oral seeking behaviors.

7 MORE PROPRIOCEPTIVE INPUT TO THE WHOLE BODY

- Oral motor input provides calming proprioceptive input, so try incorporating more heavy work to the entire body. Animal walks, deep pressure, etc.

8 PRACTICE CHALLENGING MOUTH MOVEMENTS

- Use card games such as the ["Can Do" Oral-Motor Fun Deck](#) to practice more oral motor movements to improve awareness and coordination.

9 TEACH ABOUT THE INPUT AND EXPECTATIONS

- Identify and match feelings to the oral motor input as well as what is expected and unexpected in different situations (i.e. it's unexpected to chew your pencil apart, but it's expected to use gum.).